

## CT's Lawmakers and General Public:

America's public education is in a state of severe distress. We are in the midst of a seismic event that fits every criteria of an urgent crisis from both a historical and managerial perspective. Nationwide attempts and successes to arbitrarily ban books and control curricular content, disseminate a false and skewed perspective of history, and then punish teachers for their autonomy are imminent threats to the sanctity of teaching and learning. What we see in states like Florida, Texas, Missouri, Kentucky, Oklahoma, etc.- *all states that linger at the bottom of every poll that measures student academic performance in this nation*- is what scholars have recognized as a measurable phenomenon, one that occurs when people's personal feelings and opinions usurp their ability to recognize actual facts. Through their comprehensive and widely recognized research, Guba and Getzels confirm the perplexing recurrence of "feelings over facts" and also found that most people stuck in this cycle of unrelenting emotions rely almost solely on "elites" to guide their thinking. In other words, if politicians fail to correct untruths, people will continue to abandon reason in exchange for primitivism. This puts great ethical responsibility on the shoulders of lawmakers; we are in an era of crisis in which feelings are indeed transcending into the world of fact. Some politicians are remaining stagnant and silent, or worse- reinforcing paranoia and falsehood through mandates that place teachers at the center of unnecessary controversy.

Of course, this brings into question the intentions of the elites who do this. Are they protecting their own feelings, emotions, and opinions? Are they fearful of losing their institutionalized power? Are they just ignorant about what really works in classrooms because they have never been teachers or have never actually talked to students about their wants and needs? Are they overtly racist, homophobic, and fundamentalist? Are they simply uneducated and never had access to credible information? No matter the origin, legislators and citizens need to take action to protect Connecticut's third-ranked PK-12 public educational system from plummeting into an abyss of selfishness and absurdity that is plaguing the aforementioned failing school systems in other states.

Lawmakers and citizens can coalesce to prevent further escalation of this crisis. First, we can acknowledge its roots and the triggering events that caused it. These foundational events are too numerous to list during the brevity of a public hearing because they began hundreds of years ago at the conception of our country, yet sensible people can agree that 2016 was a critical turning point. Next, we can erect a plan to protect the crisis from erupting into sheer madness. Grissom and Condon are another set of researcher-scholars who can guide us. They would urge us to begin by stopping any "fundamental disruption" to schooling. Thankfully, our laws are already in place to do this. Connecticut court precedent has already provided that objections to curriculum must fall only into specific, predetermined categories. None of these "buckets" include teaching students about authentic history, or about race, sexual orientation, and/or personal identity. We therefore must start by following the precedent that exists and barricading teachers against any feelings-driven objections to their teaching that are not already covered by our law. We can do this by passing H.B. 6444. Then, we must limit the interference from "acute cases of outside forces" that work to undermine public education and professional

decision-making of our teachers. Again, this means passing H.B. 6444, so teachers can actually teach without fear of retribution because of shortsighted abandonment of facts. We must silence the noise. Lastly, we must prevent another triggering event like the one we lived through in 2016. This means, the public must continue to vote for reasonable lawmakers of all parties whose decisions reside in fact, not feelings. By passing H.B. 6444, citizens can send a message about the leaders they elected to represent them, leaders who should be committed to reason. Passing H.B. 6444 also demonstrates that our political leaders have faith in Connecticut's 3rd-ranked teachers, a group that shares the intellect and humanity to make decisions that affirm each and every student in their classrooms.

Moving forward with H.B. 6444 means that we are collectively going to *prepare-respond-learn*: prepare for propelling Connecticut forward in an unprecedented time in national educational history, thus setting the standard for other states; we are also going to respond to the crisis and learn from it. As James and Wooten argue, "crises are opportunities for organizational change and revitalization because a crisis brings to leadership's attention issues that have been neglected and present possibilities for innovation and system improvements." I urge you to be a part of transformational change and improvement, not regression. Choose to enact a guarantee, a promise to teachers that we will protect them from punishment because of their commitment to teaching students- through their actions- the extraordinary importance of fact, reason, and truth. Now is the time to quiet the noise.

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